

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF CHILDREN'S TRUST FUND
TO THE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE
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FROM: Pamela Langer, M.A., ConnPAT State Leader
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I want to thank the committee for hearing my testimony in support of the Children's Trust Fund. As Connecticut's State Leader for Parents as Teachers I have been involved with the Nurturing Families Network programs for over 20 years. My association with the Children's Trust Fund has evolved over the past several years. I have been involved with their planning for training, evaluation and record-keeping for about a year and so have had access to their system in a way others do not. Last year I worked with Karen Foley-Schain and CTF's evaluator on a proposal to develop a plan of collaboration for all the home visitation programs in the state.

What I can share with you is my knowledge that the Children's Trust Fund provides training for their staff – program managers, clinical supervisors and home visitors – that is wide-reaching and continual. Their evaluation is a process that is imbedded into the programs in a manner that ensures that the input from every visit is recorded and available for review. The system that they have put in place - and that they are updating even as we speak - is more extensive than any I have ever seen in our field. The third area that Children's Trust Fund excels in is support for their program staff. In a field where the home visitors are often "on their own" Children's Trust Fund's system provides not just on-going supervision but clinical supervision which is vital when working with families who are experiencing life-trauma almost every day. In addition, they provide regular opportunities for the staff to share their experiences, to release the stress their work builds up, and build upon the skills needed to work with the highest-need families. The Children's Trust Fund's technical assistants also assist in these areas; by observing during home visits and providing assistance to staff and to families.

Not only am I concerned about losing the Children's Trust Fund which is an invaluable resource to the home visitation field but I am also concerned about moving NFN programs to the Department of Children & Families. Home visitors are already being asked "are you from DCF?" They need to reassure families they are not with DCF before they are allowed into homes. Therefore, questions that should be asked at this time are: Will families enroll in a DCF program? Will the program be seen as intervention and not prevention? Will DCF provide the oversight that Children's Trust Fund now offers – and if so, what will that cost be?

The most important question here is: Can this truly unique system of training, support and evaluation continue under another agency? Having worked with several types of home visitation programs for a long time I can tell you that I have not see this system occur in any other organization. In fact, I have observed that without the extensive oversight that Children's Trust Fund provides to their programs, many families are not receiving the services that they need in order to ensure that their children reach their potential. How does this affect Connecticut? We will see even more children being abused or neglected – we will see even more children not receiving the treatment they need for delays – we will see even more children not being prepared for school – we will see even more children not only lagging behind in their education but not succeeding – we will see our prisons being even more crowded. All of these will add to Connecticut's burden, not only in the budget but in loss of human capital, that will make cutting Children's Trust Fund look like a drop in the bucket. We need to be concerned with the very serious “ripples” that will result from eliminating the Children's Trust Fund. Thank you again for listening.